



Formulaic Language Sequences and Oral Interaction in the Primary English Classroom

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Só existe saber na invenção, na reinvenção, na busca inquieta, impaciente, permanente, que os homens fazem no mundo, com o mundo e com os outros. Busca esperançosa também¹.

Paulo Freire (2015, p. 81)

¹Knowledge lies only in invention, in reinvention, in a search that is restless, impatient, permanent, which people do in the world, with the world and with others. It is also a hopeful search [my translation].

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FORMULAIC LANGUAGE SEQUENCES AND ORAL INTERACTION IN THE PRIMARY ENGLISH CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

KEYWORDS: formulaic language, oral interaction, pair work, young learners.

The present study focuses on formulaic language use in oral interaction in primary EFL classrooms, aiming to explore how the use of formulaic sequences makes peer-interaction possible and how learners' production and attitudes towards speaking in the classroom are affected by these interactions. This action research project was carried out with a 3rd grade class of 30 students in a primary school in Portugal. From the language presented by their coursebook, six chunks were selected and divided into two groups. Before the communicative tasks using the selected sequences, participants took written pre-task tests in order to check how familiar they were with the chunks. The interactions were audio-recorded and analysed qualitatively, considering improvements in learners' accurate use of the chunk. After the interactions, participants answered a written post-task test to assess their learning of the chunk by the end of that unit of work. A delayed oral post-task test also took place in order to examine learners' production of the first set of chunks one month after using it in class for the last time. Participants also answered two similar questionnaires (one at the beginning and one near the end of this project) which contained questions about their feelings towards speaking, listening and interacting in class. Findings suggest that learners' oral production improved with each interaction using the chunks, that they enjoyed working with peers and that they felt more confident in their ability to speak English in class.

LINGUAGEM FORMULAICA E INTERAÇÃO ORAL NAS AULAS DE INGLÊS NO 1º CICLO DO ENSINO BÁSICO

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RESUMO

PLAVRAS-CHAVE: linguagem formulaica, interação oral, trabalho a pares, crianças.

O presente estudo concentra-se no uso de linguagem de formulaica em interação oral em aulas de inglês no 1º Ciclo do Ensino Básico, com o objetivo de explorar como o uso de sequências formulaicas torna possível a interação entre pares e como a produção e as atitudes dos alunos em relação à fala na sala de aula são afetadas por essas interações. Este projeto de pesquisa-ação foi realizado com uma turma do 3º ano com 30 alunos em uma escola primária em Portugal. Do conteúdo apresentado no livro, seis *chunks* foram selecionados e divididos em dois grupos. Antes das tarefas comunicativas usando as sequências selecionadas, os participantes fizeram testes escritos pré-tarefas, a fim de verificar se estavam familiarizados com as sequências. As interações foram gravadas em áudio e analisadas qualitativamente, considerando melhorias no uso da língua por parte dos alunos. Após as interações, os participantes responderam a um teste escrito pós-tarefa para avaliar o aprendizado do *chunk* ao final dessa unidade de trabalho. Também ocorreu um teste oral pós-tarefa, a fim de examinar a produção dos alunos relativa ao primeiro conjunto de *chunks*, um mês depois de usá-lo em sala de aula pela última vez. Os participantes também responderam a dois questionários semelhantes (um no início e outro no final do projeto), que continham perguntas sobre seus sentimentos em relação a falar, ouvir e interagir em sala de aula. Os resultados sugerem que a produção oral dos alunos melhorou a cada interação usando os *chunks*, que eles gostaram de trabalhar com colegas e que se sentiram mais confiantes em sua capacidade de falar inglês na sala de aula.

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Introduction

Since I started teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) almost nine years ago, and after having studied education in various contexts, I have held the belief that teaching does not mean “depositing” content into students’ minds. Teachers should rather be helping students discover, explore and play with the language with increasingly greater autonomy. We are only there to facilitate the process.

As teachers of EFL in a primary education context, we must be aware that we are not exclusively teaching a foreign language in our lessons. At school, children develop social, cognitive and linguistic abilities. Philp writes that interaction facilitates language acquisition “by assisting comprehension; supporting learner output; drawing attention to language form and meaning; and providing feedback contiguous with the learner’s attention” (2013, p. 459). Children learn much more by experimenting with the language, using it repeatedly and meaningfully, than by memorizing grammatical rules that do not mean anything to them and which they will likely forget about in the future.

Although most recognize that interaction is a vital part of learning, many primary teachers still think their students are not able to engage in such activities due to their low level of proficiency. However, provided with the right tools, learners can be much more than mere observers of the language, and become active agents of their own learning. Moreover, given that the development of oral skills is explicitly one of the main objectives proposed for grades 3 and 4 in the Portuguese *Metas Curriculares de Inglês – 1º Ciclo* (Bravo, Cravo, & Duarte, 2015), learners should be speaking English in the classroom as often as possible.

In more practical terms, how can we help students who are often taught lists of individual words to develop a conversation? We cannot expect young learners around 9 years old who have just started studying English or who have been doing so for one or two years to come up with complex sentences completely by themselves. One possible way to foster language learning through learner interaction is by providing students with prefabricated chunks of language ready to use, also known as formulaic language sequences. Different terms are used by researchers of the field to identify these “multiword units of language which are stored in long-term memory as if they were single lexical units” (Wood, 2010, p. 29). In this study, such multiword units will be called “formulaic language”, “formulaic sequences” and “chunks”.

Furthermore, because the years of primary education are only the beginning of children's trajectory learning a foreign language, it is important to encourage them to enjoy learning and using this language. It is very common to meet adult learners of English who are "afraid" of speaking. The reasons behind this fear are varied; however, one of them is usually the lack of opportunities to practice. Primary EFL teachers should take advantage that young learners are often less likely to be shy and resistant to speak in class (especially to a peer), and create opportunities to foster a positive attitude towards speaking English early-on.

I started learning EFL at the age of eight in a communication based language school. As the years progressed, I learned the language without thinking explicitly about how it worked and without hearing any grammatical explanations until I was old enough to understand them. With my years of experience as an EFL learner and teacher and after going through this Masters course, I feel reassured on my beliefs that it is not essential to expose young learners to grammar rules and that if the goal is to help students become able to communicate, then the best way to do so is to let them speak.

In this light, one of the objectives behind this research project is to show how integrating oral interaction into our lessons is not only possible, but necessary. Understanding formulaic language acquisition and oral interaction as a two-way process, and noticing changes in learners' attitudes towards speaking in class, the present study was developed in order to answer the following research questions:

- How can teaching learners formulaic language facilitate peer-interaction?
- How can peer-interaction influence learners' attitudes towards speaking English?

Chapter I: Literature Review

This section of the report aims to provide an overview of previous studies on oral interaction and on the role of formulaic language sequences in EFL learning and teaching. The authors and texts referenced here helped me try to answer my research questions, providing a theoretical background and foundation for the analysis I shall conduct later in this report. Focusing specifically on young learners' development and language learning, this literature review is divided into two subsections, which reflect the topics previously mentioned.

1. Oral Interaction in Young Learners Development and Language Learning

Much has been written about the benefits of interaction in language learning. In this study, special attention will be given to interaction between young learners, also called peer interaction, which can be defined as “any communicative activity carried out *between learners*, where there is minimal or no participation from the teacher” (Philp, Adams & Iwashita, 2013, p. 3). As said in the introduction, children learn more than a language when interacting. In fact, hardly ever do they realise the linguistic goal behind communicative tasks carried out in the classroom. The language is a tool, which they use to achieve a social goal – to share a piece of news, to collect information about their peers, to tell a story or to take part in a game (Oliver & Philp, 2014; Philp & Duchesne, 2008).

Research has shown that working in small groups tends to lower learners’ anxiety and foster participation (Oliver & Philp, 2014). Due to less pressure, shy children benefit from listening and talking to a partner. Imagining a class of 30 children, this might even be the only form of interaction possible as not everyone will have a chance to participate or to interact with the teacher. Even though it can be hard to manage large groups, through engaging communicative tasks done in pairs or small groups, all learners have a chance to participate, to learn how to interact and develop their linguistic competences through the interaction itself.

In the social context of a school, a fundamental part of their learning process is related to how they interact with peers and adults, that is, how to socialize appropriately. Philp and Duchesne write, “It is important to view the child’s linguistic, social and cognitive needs and development as interconnected” (2008, p. 84). EFL teachers help children learn important social skills such as how to take turns in a conversation or while playing, how to greet others, how to address different people appropriately, how to take part in a group discussion politely and how to build relationships.

On the linguistic side, interaction contributes to language learning in both production and comprehension, providing learners with oral practice as well as much needed input. While engaged in communicative tasks, they can discover and test how a language system works and how they can use it to convey their message in a way that others will understand (Oliver & Philp, 2014). During interaction, learners can correct themselves, be corrected or correct a partner, identify gaps in their own language knowledge, use their peer as another source of meaningful input, memorize structures,

develop fluency and accuracy; all with a more authentic and not simply linguistic goal (Oliver & Philp, 2014).

1.1. Learners attitudes towards speaking English

According to Halliwell, children's instinct for interaction is "one of the most powerful motivators for using the language" (1992, p. 9). It is something to be taken advantage of rather than feared. Still according to her, primary language teachers have the chance and the responsibility to make "attitude goals" a priority in our lessons, as the syllabus is still not as focused on exams as it will increasingly be. She writes that "risk taking, confidence and general goodwill towards language learning" (1992, p. 10) should be fostered from the beginning as they are essential to successful learning throughout students' lives.

Dunn (2012) argues that lifelong attitudes are formed during childhood and that most children do not fear not knowing how to speak a language. The author adds that using English to sing, chant or to complete oral tasks in pleasurable situations gives young learners a feeling of achievement and self-satisfaction. Just as Halliwell (1992) talks about the importance of risk taking, Dunn writes that "young children are willing to say something, as their main aim is to communicate, to talk to you, without worrying about mistakes" (2012, p. 16).

Sato (2013) conducted a study with 167 Japanese adult university EFL learners to investigate their beliefs about peer-interaction and peer corrective feedback. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods, he found that students' opinion towards peer-interaction was favourable from the beginning because learners felt less exposed and less fearful of making mistakes during peer interaction than while speaking to the teacher or in front of the whole class.

2. Formulaic Language in EFL

Formulaic language has been a topic of growing interest for researchers of FL learning and acquisition over the past decades. It is now known that sequences of words which are often encountered together, make up a considerable amount of spoken and written language (Nguyen & Larsen-Freeman, 2018). Chunks are often used in FL teaching (i.e. in role-plays, chants, rhymes, songs and stories) and seem to fit well young learners' specificities. One reason for this is that, according to Skehan (as cited in Blasco,

2017), language learning develops through two complementary models; one based on grammatical rules (the rule-based system), and one based on the storage of unanalysed language chunks with communicative functions (the exemplar-based system). Focusing on young learners, Blasco writes:

Due to the analytical nature of the rule-based system, the cognitive effort required by learners to access grammatical knowledge to construct utterances is considerable for YLs, who have not yet developed a metalinguistic capacity. Because of this, YLs at early stages of language learning are thought to draw on their exemplar-based system when communicating (2017, p. 177).

From the extract above, it can be understood that due to the fact that children are not able to analyse language, teaching grammatical rules to young learners might not be the best option to nurture their language learning. This is not to say that some attention should not be called to form, however, teaching formulaic sequences and providing learners with opportunities to communicate seems to be more effective than giving long grammar explanations.

Schmitt and Carter (2004) write about how formulaic sequences play an important role in first (L1) and second (L2) language acquisition as a quick means to communication, although the chunks used tend to be quite limited in early stages. According to them, there is also evidence of the benefit of formulaic language learning in the “phonological front”, as the chunks are usually produced “more fluently, with a coherent intonation contour, to the extent that this has been accepted as one criterion of formulaicity” (p. 5). Because such sequences are stored in our minds and withdrawn as units, they are produced more fluently and processed more rapidly than single lexical items (Kersten, 2015). In agreement, based on other studies, Hatami (2014), defends that formulaic sequences decrease cognitive processing efforts, working as a shortcut for production and comprehension, and thus increasing fluency.

As previously stated, and of special interest to this study, one key element in measuring fluency is the number and duration of pauses per utterance. According to Wood (2010), the fewer pauses (filled or unfilled) a speaker makes, the more fluent he/she sounds. The author states that pauses are usually time taken by learners to plan what they are going to say (remembering a word, forming a sentence or even translating from L1). An increase in fluency happens partly due to a process known as automatization, with which chunks “are retrieved from long-term memory so as to be used with less need for conscious effort or control” (Wood, 2010, p. 5), therefore, less time is needed to form

sentences. Repetition and practice are known paths towards automatization (Ellis, 2002; Wood, 2010).

Similarly to what happens with teaching and learning single lexical items, students need to be exposed to and practice a chunk of language repeatedly in order to acquire it. Kersten (2015) highlights the importance of repetition and variation in formulaic language acquisition, and gives some suggestions of how this could be explored with young learners (e.g. songs, rhymes, chants and picturebooks). The author affirms that even though learners' use of formulaic language may start as repetition, it has been proved to be a path towards the abstraction and internalization of gradually more complex formulas. She claims that "as learners are exposed to even more varied language, they then realize that other words can be slotted in as well, for example, [certain] adjectives preceding the noun" (Kersten, 2015, p. 135). For instance, if at the beginning of the year learners are able to produce "This is a *noun*" with some support from the teacher, after using this chunk repeatedly and encountering variations of this phrase with increased complexity, this sequence can be expanded and become "This is a/an *adjective (adjective) noun*" (e.g. "This is an old black hat").

Formulaic language sequences can be categorized as fixed or semi-fixed expressions (Kersten, 2015). A great part of spoken and written language is constituted by semi-fixed expressions, which are the focus of this study. We might consider "This is a *noun*" to be a semi-fixed phrase because of its high occurrence in the classroom context and because it accepts some variation, as seen in the previous paragraph. Wood (2010) also writes about semi-fixed phrases often called "prefabricated patterns" or "frames", which "can create a structure within which to insert novel items relevant to the content and context of speech, buying some syntactic and lexical retrieval and encoding time" (p. 55). This definition is relevant for the present study as some of the formulaic sequences taught and used by students fit this category of frames, for example "Do you *verb*?".

Several researchers have examined the relation between formulaic language, language learning and speaking. Nguyen and Larsen-Freeman (2018) investigated the acquisition of 30 formulaic sequences through task-based language teaching (TBLT) by 30 English as a Second Language (ESL) high intermediate students who were divided into three groups. One used collaborative gap-fill tasks, one was taught with spot-the-difference tasks and the third was not instructed. Results suggested that students' performance tests varied depending on the formulaic sequence and on the type of instruction the group received. Groups that received task-based instruction and completed

collaborative communicative tasks “retained the target FSs (formulaic sequences) better at both the receptive and the productive level” (2018, p. 181).

Another researcher, Yan (2019), conducted a study to examine the impact of one type of formulaic language on speech fluency of 17 L1 and 252 L2 speakers of English. Participants were recorded performing sentence repetition tasks, in which some sentences contained lexical bundles and others did not. The author concluded that formulaic language had a significant effect on the reduction of pauses in the speakers’ utterances, but not on speech rate (number of words uttered per minute). A greater difference was observed in the L2 speakers’ results than with the L1 participants.

Chapter II: The Action Research

1. Context

This study was conducted in a private catholic school in Lisbon, Portugal, with a third grade class during the first term of the school year (September – December), for approximately 12 weeks. There were 30 children in this group (14 females and 16 males), with ages between 8 and 9 years old, who shared Portuguese as their L1. There were not any students with special educational needs, but one of the boys used to have a hearing impairment and it is not clear how much he is now able to hear. As is required by the school, teachers and students prayed together at the beginning of each lesson, saying the same prayer first in English, then in Portuguese.

Students who had been in this same school since pre-school (most of them), had English lessons since then. At this school, 4 and 5 year olds had two 30 minutes lessons a week, 1st and 2nd grades had two 50 minutes lessons and 3rd and 4th grades had three 50 minutes lessons. In past years, they used to follow the *Bugs World* book series (Read & Soberón, 2009), and the new coursebook, *New Tiger 3*, (Read & Ormerod, 2018) has proven to be quite challenging for them.

In two of the third grade’s weekly lessons, the class is divided into two groups of 15 students, so the English teacher first stays with 15 students for 50 minutes, while the others have music or religious education and then the groups are swapped for another 50 minutes. During the practicum, I taught this group twice a week (one day with the whole class and one day sharing with the music class) and my cooperating teacher taught once (sharing the group with the religious studies teacher).

Previous teachers adopted a communicative approach, using stories, songs and games with this group. Lessons usually gave special focus to listening and speaking, in accordance with the *Metas Curriculares* (Bravo, Cravo & Duarte, 2015), however, students in the third and fourth grades took two written tests per term and were expected to know how to read and write individual words and short sentences.

2. Methodology

2.1. Action Research

This report is the result of an Action Research (AR) project. This kind of cyclical study essentially consists of continuous practice and inquiry, action and reflection (Tripp, 2005). According to Burns (2010), AR converts the teacher into an investigator of their own practice, selecting a topic that they find relevant, exploring it, systematically collecting data, looking for ways to improve and later using what was discovered to modify their practice.

The main goals of this project were to find out how teaching learners formulaic language could facilitate peer oral interaction and how taking part in these interactions could influence learners' attitude towards speaking English in class. In order to answer these questions, I followed three stages, as following:

- a) Planning: Selecting language chunks to be taught and tested based on the language presented in the first three units of the coursebook. Developing data gathering tools (questionnaires and pre-task tests).
- b) Data collection: Implementing the data gathering tools, recording students during interactions, adjusting tools if necessary.
- c) Reflection: Analysing and interpreting collected data.

2.2. Letters of consent

In early September, prior to the beginning of this study, letters of consent were prepared and handed to the school director and to parents (Appendixes A and B). Making sure all stakeholders and participants knew exactly what the research was about, how data was going to be collected and requesting their permission to use this data was of utmost importance to develop an ethical study.

As central subjects in this project, it was essential to give the children the chance to decide whether they wanted to participate or not. After the director and parents had

given permission, I presented the project to students and gave them their own letters of consent (Appendix C). Considering participants' ages, the language used was child-friendly and the text was presented as true or false statements to check their understanding. Students also chose the pseudonyms that would replace their real names in the study. All 30 pupils agreed to take part in the project.

2.3. Selecting formulaic sequences

In order to prepare the pre-task tests, oral tasks and post-task tests, two sets of formulaic sequences were selected to be taught, in accordance with the language found in the coursebook. The first sequences selected were: "Do you *verb*?", "Yes, I do" and "No, I don't". The following vocabulary items were also taught: listen to music, play games, use a computer, make things, paint pictures, take photos, watch films, help people, do sports, go on excursions. The vocabulary was first introduced by my cooperating teacher using flashcards and doing a listening exercise.

The second set of chunks consisted of: "Has it got (a) *noun*?", "Yes, it has" and "No, it hasn't". The vocabulary items of this unit were: whiskers, shell, teeth, claws, scales, fur, wings, tail, beak and feathers. The nouns and verb phrases were first presented and practiced individually using flashcards, a listen and do game and a PowerPoint presentation presented as a guessing game.

2.4. Data collection tools

Data was collected over a period of 12 weeks. Questionnaires, pre-task tests, recorded communicative tasks, post-task tests and a learning/teaching journal were used to gather information on students' feelings towards speaking in class, their knowledge of the formulaic language and their use during interactions. The table below shows how the tests and tasks were divided between the two sets of chunks.

Table 1 – Chunks and Tools

Chunks	Pre-task test	Tasks	Post-task test
"Do you <i>verb</i>?" "Yes, I do" "No, I don't"	Ordering Words (Appendix D)	Class survey (Appendix F)	Formal Test 1 (Appendix H) Delayed oral post-task: Days of the week and sports comparison (Appendix I)

		Mini cards comparison (Appendix G)	
“Has it got a noun?” “Yes, it has” “No, it hasn’t”	Ordering Words (Appendix E)	Guessing the animal	Formal test 2 (Appendix J)

2.4.1. Pre- and Post-task Tests

Inspired by the model of data collection used by Nguyen and Larsen-Freeman (2018), I decided to follow a test-teach-test format in this study. Prior to the introduction of the formulaic sequences, it was necessary to find out which chunks were familiar to students and which were not. Therefore, at the beginning of each unit, individually, learners completed a written pre-task test. During this research project, I used two different formats of pre-task tests, one (pre-task test 1) in which students had to organize the given words into sentences (Appendixes D and E), and one, similar to the pre-task tests used by Nguyen and Larsen-Freeman (2018), entitled pre-task test 2, which asked students to read a sentence and indicate if they understood it or not (Appendix K).

Pre-task test 2, however, did not serve its purpose, as it only tested one chunk (“It’s got *noun*”) and asked learners to mark if they knew the meaning of the chunk or not. The age difference between the participants of Nguyen and Larsen-Freeman’s study (college students) and the ones in this project was determinant for the failure of this type of test. The children’s answers proved to be unreliable because although many answered they were familiar with the chunk, when asked to translate or to explain it, only one child in the class was able to do so. Therefore, the results of this pre-task test were discarded and in pre-task test 3 I returned to the format of the first pre-task test. The results of the tests were analysed quantitatively and the results are presented in the next chapter.

Post-task tests were prepared to test if learners had acquired the formulaic sequences by the end of each unit of work. The first post-task test (Appendix H) was a question in the first formal assessment test similar in format to pre-task tests 1 and 3. The second (Appendix J) was another question in the second formal assessment test. For the purpose of this study it was necessary to conduct an oral post-task test which evidenced changes in learners’ oral performance. Therefore, on the 11th week of the practicum,

students completed an oral task (described in the next sub-section) using the first set of chunks they had learned. Due to time constraints and an inability to balance this study with the school's events and required assessment schedules, there was not an opportunity for a second communicative task or an oral post-test of the second set of chunks.

2.4.2. Communicative Tasks

Following the pre-task tests, students were exposed to the target language (new vocabulary and language chunks) in context and completed different communicative tasks in pairs. All tasks were demonstrated and modelled by the teacher with the help of students who volunteered. During all tasks, the formulaic sequences were displayed on the board so learners could refer to them if necessary.

Pairs were assigned with each pair consisting of a boy and a girl to make transcribing the recordings easier due to the voice differences. Their proficiency level was not considered a criterion in the division because neither my cooperating teacher nor I were aware of students' language levels at the beginning of the year.

The first communicative task (Task 1) was a class survey and took place in the third lesson of Unit 1 (Appendix F). After the demonstration, students had two minutes to prepare the questions they wanted to ask and then proceeded with the survey. After two lessons encountering and using this language in listening, reading and writing, students performed another communicative task (Task 2) with the same formulaic sequences. This time, they had to divide mini-cards with the vocabulary (Appendix G) into "do" and "don't", and use the sequences given in order to compare their answers with their partner's, finding differences and similarities.

On the 11th week of this study, a delayed oral post-task test examined learners' acquisition of the first set of chunks. Students had to place mini-cards of sports (the vocabulary topic of the unit) on a chart with the days of the week (Appendix I). With cards facing down, learners in pairs had to try to guess what sport their partner did on which day. In order to create an extra challenge, and to illustrate how it is possible to build upon a previously known chunk, learners were asked to produce "Do you *verb* on *day*?". During this task, only the question chunk was written on the board.

The first and only task done using the second set of chunks (Task 1 – "Has it got *noun*?", "Yes, it has" and "No, it hasn't") was done on the 9th week of the study in the context of animal body parts. A picture with different animals the students already knew

was projected on the board. In pairs, each learner had to write the name of one of the animals, cover it so their partner could not see and ask questions trying to guess what animal their partner had chosen. The formulaic sequences were written on the board and three more were added (“Is it a *noun*?”, “Yes, it is”, “Not, it isn’t”).

2.4.3. Recordings

Nine pairs were recorded performing tasks 1, 2, 3 and the oral post-task test as seen in Table 2 below.

Table 2 – Relation of tasks and dyads recorded

Task and Date	Pairs recorded
Task 1 (03/10)	1, 2, 10 and 12
Task 2 (10/10)	1, 4, 10 and 11
Task 1 – second set of chunks (14/11)	5, 7, 12 and 13
Post-task test (28/11)	1, 4, 10 and 13

The length of recordings varied according to the task. For instance, the first interactions lasted between one and two minutes, while the post-task test took eight to ten minutes. To analyse the interactions recorded, I listened and transcribed them using the transcription conventions shown in Appendix L. The transcriptions were analysed qualitatively, interpreting and examining the language produced, considering fluency, repetition, pronunciation and accurate use of the formulaic sequences. By comparing the transcriptions, it was possible to observe how using the chunks allowed learners to carry out the interactions and to track developing accuracy (how well students used the chunks, if all words were used correctly) and fluency (number of pauses per utterance). In this study, “fluency” will be used referring to how “natural” (uninterrupted) an utterance sounds, considering moments of hesitation, repetition of words or syllables, filled and unfilled pauses (Wood, 2010).

2.4.4. Questionnaires

In order to answer my second research question, to find out how learners felt regarding their speaking skills, two questionnaires were distributed, one at the beginning and one in the end of the practicum.

The first questionnaire (Appendix M) was prepared and given to children in order to understand what they felt they were able to do in English. There were four

statements focusing mainly on the skills essential for oral interaction (listening and speaking), and if they thought it was important to do oral tasks in class. For each statement, students had to choose an answer that was true for them, circling “Yes”, “More or Less” or “No”. In order to get to know them and find out their preferences, I also asked learners to tick which interaction patterns they liked and which activities they liked to do in the classroom.

In the last week of the practicum, learners answered a second questionnaire (Appendix N), similar to the first one, but to which I added a sentence to find out if they enjoyed doing speaking activities and one open question, asking what their favourite activity had been this term. The results of both questionnaires were analysed quantitatively and are presented and discussed in the next section.

2.4.5. Teaching Journal

Another important tool in this research project was the notes taken by the teacher during and after the lessons. Notes were taken while students were on task to register any relevant observations and immediately after the lesson. Notes were used to supplement the analysis of the transcripts, to help me reflect and think of solutions to difficulties faced during the lessons and also to gather data on students’ attitudes towards speaking and working in pairs throughout the practicum.

3. Results

In this section, I shall present and analyse the results obtained throughout this study, in order to answer the research questions.

3.1. Data Analysis

3.1.1. First set of formulaic sequences – pre-task test 1

Before having any practice with the formulaic sequences selected, students answered the first pre-task test (Appendix D) in which they were asked to organize sentences forming two questions and their corresponding answers. Their performance was analysed quantitatively.

The results are shown in Figure 1. As we can see, 11 out of 30 students were able to form both questions and answers correctly, 8 were able to form only the questions,

2 only the answers and 9 students could form neither questions nor answers. Based on these results, it was observed that most learners (19) were able to form questions using the chunk “Do you *verb*?” and almost half of the group (13 students) were able to form the answers “Yes, I do” and “No, I don’t”. This meant that the chunks selected were not completely new to them. Learners had encountered these chunks briefly in the previous week during their lesson with my cooperating teacher, but had not been asked to use the language.

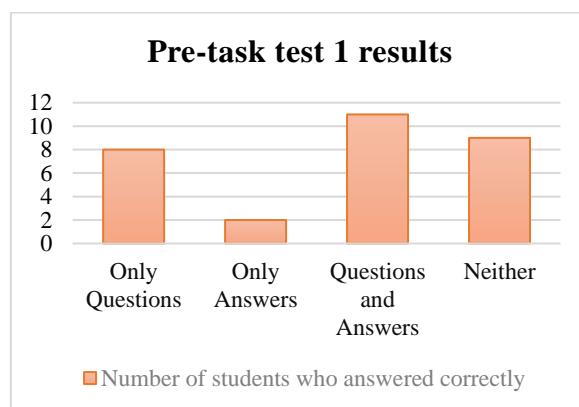


Figure 1 – Pre-task test 1 results

3.1.2. First set of formulaic sequences – Task 1

During the first interaction, students were asked to prepare three different questions before talking to two classmates. For the purpose of this project, only the interactions of four dyads were recorded (Pairs 1, 2, 10 and 12). All children were able to complete the task successfully. However, analysing the recordings it is possible to observe the differences in learners’ performances according to their knowledge of English. Overall, learners did not show difficulties with pronunciation, but, as seen below, there were moments of repetition, pauses and the omission of some words in utterances.

Although learners had time to prepare the questions they were going to ask, and chunks were written on the board, it was clear that most students were focused on the social aspect of the task, on collecting their classmates’ answers. As we can see in excerpt 1 below, Pair 10 favoured meaning and mutual comprehension over form.

Excerpt 1

1 **Adam:** Do you play games?

2 **Pompom:** Yes. Do you (3.0) watch films?

3 **Adam:** Yes, I don’t. Do you watch films?

4 **Pompom:** Yes.

5 **Adam:** Do you (2.0) listen to music?

6 **Pompom:** Yes. Do you: sports? Do you sports? Do you sports? Yes?

7 **Adam:** Yes, I don't.

8 **Pompom:** Do you listen to music?

9 **Adam:** *É... sim.* ((tr.: Hum... yes))

10 **Pompom:** Yes.

The above students were unable to use the answer chunks accurately at this stage. Pompom only replied with “Yes” in lines 2, 4, 6 and 10, which although is a more authentic way of using the language, did not match what was required. In an attempt to produce the complete sequence, Adam combined the affirmative and the negative in lines 3 and 7, and by the end of the interaction he even resorted to L1 (line 9), even though his partner tried to correct him. It is worth pointing out that Pompom did not notice or was not confused by Adam’s “Yes, I don’t” answers, as she probably only retained the meaning carried by the word “yes” and ignored the second phrase. At the end of the interaction, again focusing on meaning, Pompom translated Adam’s answer before writing it down, repeating it to show that she had understood.

The question chunk was used correctly most times, but as we can see in line 6, Pompom did not add the verb “do” before “sports”. According to my teaching journal, “most students omitted the second *do*”. This probably happened because young learners tend to focus on meaning and not to be attentive towards grammar, thus they did not see the difference between “do” as an auxiliary verb and “do” as the main verb. The repetition of the question in line 6 might be understood as an effort to make herself clear or even to call her partner’s attention. In this interaction both Adam and Pompom only paused once (lines 2 and 5) and in the same place, between “Do you” and the verb phrase, the fixed frame and the variable part of the sentence. These moments of hesitation with unfilled pauses were likely taken as time to connect the fixed and variable parts of the sentence.

Pair 2 was also able to perform Task 1 successfully, and as we can see in the excerpt below, also favoured meaning over form.

Excerpt 2

1 **Harry Potter:** Do you listen to music?

2 **Fortnite:** Yes- Yes, I do.

3 **Harry Potter:** Do you play games?

4 **Fortnite:** Yes, I do.

5 **Harry Potter:** Do you do sports?

6 **Fortnite:** Yes, I do. Do sports?

7 **Harry Potter:** Yes.

8 **Fortnite:** Play games?

9 **Harry Potter:** Yes.

10 **Fortnite:** Use a computer?

11 **Harry Potter:** Yes.

While Harry Potter was able to use the question chunks accurately (lines 1, 3 and 5), Fortnite completely omitted the auxiliary verb and the subject in lines 6, 8 and 10 even though he had just heard his partner ask the questions. This is another example of how children tend to focus only on the parts of the sentences which carry meaning. This error, however, did not interfere in his partner's understanding as we can see from her answers, because she also favoured meaning over form. Although he failed to use the question chunks, Fortnite corrected himself in line 2 and only answered with "Yes, I do" to all questions even with a moment of hesitation on line 2 when he repeated "Yes". On the other hand, Harry Potter only answered with "yes" (lines 7, 9 and 11), similarly to what happened with pair 10 in excerpt 3. Sticking to short utterances and often omitting the question chunk, this dyad did not make any pauses.

3.1.3. First set of formulaic sequences – Task 2

The following week, learners performed Task 2, in which they had to divide the mini-cards into two groups and compare their answers. Although there was only a short period of time between the previous recording and the one transcribed below, it is possible to see some difference in Pair 10's production.

Excerpt 3

1 **Pompom:** Do you use a computer?

2 **Adam:** Yes.

3 **Pompom:** Do you do sports?

4 **Adam:** No.

5 **Pompom:** Play game... Do you play games?

6 **Adam:** Yes. Do you make things?

7 **Pompom:** What?

8 **Adam:** Do you make things? *Faz cenas.* ((tr: make things))

9 **Pompom:** Yes, I do.

10 **Adam:** Do you paint pictures?

11 **Pompom:** Yes, I do: [singing].

Here, students were able to use the language and the chunks, even though they did not have the time to prepare the questions as they did the first time. They were singing some of the questions and answers playfully and according to my teaching journal on the 10th of October, “some students came up with their own questions, using verbs that were not taught in class” (e.g. “Do you swim?”). Comparing with excerpt 2, during this second task learners did not make as many pauses or hesitate, though on line 5, Pompom’s initial repetition might be interpreted as a filled pause, while she thought of how to structure the question. Not only are their utterances more fluent (with fewer pauses), but also their use of the formulaic sequences is accurate and complete. As we can see, although Adam still used only short “Yes/No” answers, Pompom started using the whole chunk “Yes, I do” (lines 9 and 11). She also asked the question “Do you do sports?” correctly in line 3, something she had not been able to do previously.

Unlike pair 10, not all learners showed a significant improvement in this second interaction. In the excerpt below, Pair 4 was able to complete the task, but partially failed to use the formulaic sequences.

Excerpt 4

1 **Ibrahimović:** Do you watch films?

2 **Milk Cake:** No. *Agora sou eu* ((tr: Now it’s me)). Do you sports?

3 **Ibrahimović:** Yes.

4 **Milk Cake:** Help people?

5 **Ibrahimović:** No.

6 **Milk Cake:** Go on excursions?

7 **Ibrahimović:** Yes. Do you make things?

8 **Milk Cake:** No.

9 **Ibrahimović:** No. Play games?

10 **Milk Cake:** Yes, I do.

Even though Ibrahimović began the interaction using the formulaic sequence correctly (line 1) and again in line 7, his use of the question chunk was inconsistent as we can see in line 9. Milk Cake, on the other hand, only used the question frame in line 2; in lines 4 and 6 she omitted the auxiliary verb and the subject (like Fortnite in excerpt 2), favouring the verb phrases which contained more meaning. She omitted the second “do” in line 2, making the same mistake as many other learners and as Pompom in excerpt 1,

line 6. Similar to what happened to Pair 2 in excerpt 2, there were no significant pauses (longer than one second) in this interaction, because learners kept utterances short and often omitted “Do you”.

3.1.4. First set of formulaic sequences – Post-task Tests

The first post-test to assess learners’ acquisition of the chunks was a question in the formal assessment test (Appendix H) they took on the 23rd of October. The question was similar to the pre-task test and other written exercises done in the classroom, in which students were asked to order words to form questions and write negative and affirmative answers.

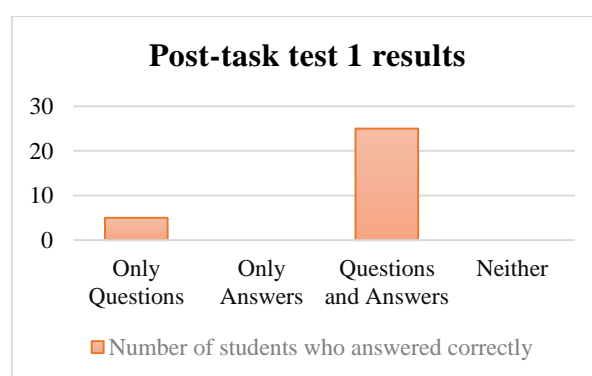


Figure 2 – Post-task test 1 results

Comparing the above with the results of the pre-task test, it is clear that the chunks were acquired, although not exclusively through interaction. It should be pointed out that of the five children who only formed the questions correctly, three did not write the answers, which could mean they did not completely understand what was being asked of them.

By the end of November, as a delayed post-test, the students had to complete another communicative task using new mini-cards and a chart with the days of the week (Appendix I). During this task, learners had use the frame “Do you *verb* on *day*?” and the answer chunks “Yes, I do” and “No, I don’t”. All children were able to complete the task successfully and spoke English, though some L1 was still used for task management. It is possible to state that even after a month without using the first chunks, the children were still able to use them without hesitation. Looking at Pair 10’s interaction, it seems that past difficulties using “do” as the main verb were overcome (lines 1 and 4) and the use of the answer chunks became more consistent.

Excerpt 5

- 1 **Pompom:** Do you do judo Monday?
- 2 **Adam:** No, I don't.
- 3 **Pompom:** Do you skateboard Friday?
- 4 **Adam:** No, I don't. Do you do judo a-a [stutters] Wednesday?
- 5 **Pompom:** Wednesday? No. No, I don't. Do you dive on Friday?
- 6 **Adam:** Dive on Friday... no. Do you dive (3.0) Tuesday?
- 7 **Pompom:** Yes, I do!

Another feature of interest in this excerpt is how the new part of the chunk was being produced. During this interaction (continued in Appendix O), in only 3 (2 by Adam and 1 by Pompom) of the 14 questions asked did the children use the preposition “on”. There were pauses and hesitation mainly between the verb phrase and the day of the week, where the preposition should go, suggesting that the first chunk was learnt as a unit. Again, this is another example of children favouring meaning over form. Therefore, the lack of the preposition “on” might be interpreted as indicative of how young learners are more likely to use words that carry “concrete” meaning (i.e. days of the week) than function words. If this second part of the chunk (“on *day*”) is used again in other tasks and if the teacher calls students attention directly to the preposition, stressing its use, then they will probably start using it without having to understand its syntactic role.

Analysing Pair 1's interaction in excerpt 6, it is also possible to notice some improvement in their language use and conversational skills.

Excerpt 6

- 1 **Apagador:** Do you do karate on Thursday?
- 2 **Chocolate Pro:** No, I don't. Do you ice skate on Thursday?
- 3 **Apagador:** Ice skate on Tuesday?
- 4 **Chocolate Pro:** Thursday! *Não disse* ((tr: I didn't say)) Tuesday, *eu disse* ((tr: I said)) Thursday!
- 5 **Apagador:** No, I don't.
- 6 **Chocolate Pro:** Do you ice skate on Wednesday?
- 7 **Apagador:** Yes, I do. Do you... do you... do you rollerblade on Wednesday?
- 8 **Chocolate Pro:** No, I don't. Do you dive on Friday?
- 9 **Apagador:** No. Do you do karate on Monday?
- 10 **Chocolate Pro:** Yes, I do. Do you dive on Thursday?
- 11 **Apagador:** Dive...?
- 12 **Chocolate Pro:** Dive Thursday.

13 **Apagador:** No.

Pair 1 had been able to use the first set of chunks without much difficulty since the first interaction. Thus, it was interesting to observe how they were able to expand that question chunk accurately, as both Apagador and Chocolate Pro used the preposition and the days of the week correctly. Comparing the excerpt above with interactions of other dyads, it is clear that these students were more dynamic in taking turns. Even though on line 7, Apagador repeated “Do you” twice before structuring the question correctly, filling a pause while thinking as she tried to choose what to ask.

Pair 4 also showed progress in relation to their performance on Task 2.

Excerpt 7

1 **Ibrahimović:** Do you dive on Monday?

2 **Milk Cake:** No.

3 **Ibrahimović:** Do you play table tennis on Monday?

4 **Milk Cake:** Yes.

5 **Ibrahimović:** Do you dive on Thursday? [outside noise] Dive on Thursday?

6 **Milk Cake:** No.

7 **Ibrahimović:** Do you dive on on on on Wednesday?

8 **Milk Cake:** Yes. Do karate and Monday?

9 **Ibrahimović:** No.

10 **Milk Cake:** Play table tennis Monday?

11 **Ibrahimović:** No.

12 **Milk Cake:** Do you dive Thursday?

13 **Ibrahimović:** No.

As we can see in excerpt 7, Ibrahimović (who had not been consistent in the use of “Do you *verb*?”) moved on from the original question chunk and was able to use the preposition correctly followed by the day of the week. He even repeated the preposition on line 7, filling a pause, as he took time thinking of the day of the week he wanted to ask about. Milk Cake, on the other hand, still made the same mistake she had made in excerpt 4; she did not use the question frame “Do you” nor the preposition before the day of the week. She was very playful and distracted during this interaction and her lack of attention is evident in her production. Both learners stuck to short answers instead of using the complete chunks, again favouring meaning over form. Even though their questions were not accurate, they did not pause (apart from the one in line 7). This excerpt is an example of how different learners acquire the language at different paces. Some may take longer

than others and require some special attention. Even so, they were all able to interact, understand each other and complete the communicative tasks.

3.1.5. Second set of formulaic sequences – pre-task test

At the beginning of Unit 2 of their coursebooks, after the unsuccessful pre-task test 2, students were given a new pre-task test 3 (Appendix E) that contained the chunks “It’s got (a) *noun*”, “It hasn’t got (a) *noun*”, “Has it got (a) *noun*?” and “Yes, it has”. Learners had to organize words to form sentences. The results are as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 – Pre-task test 3 results

Chunk	Percentage of students who answered correctly
“It’s got (a) <i>noun</i> ”	50% (15)
“It hasn’t got (a) <i>noun</i> ”	0%
“Has it got (a) <i>noun</i> ?”	30% (9)
“Yes, it has”	16.6% (5)

As we can see from the results above, most learners were not familiar with the new formulaic sequences, although half of the group was familiar with “It’s got (a) *noun*”. During the lessons, we continued to use “It’s got (a) *noun*” and “It hasn’t got (a) *noun*” in listening, reading and writing. However, for the purpose of this study, the oral task and the post-task test (Appendix J) focused only on three chunks: “Has it got (a) *noun*?”, “Yes, it has” and “No, it hasn’t”.

3.1.6. Second set of formulaic sequences – Task 1

In the context of animal body parts, learners had to choose an animal, write its name and hide it, while their partner asked questions and tried to guess what it was. In this interaction, students also had to use the chunk “Is it a *noun*?” to guess the animal. All chunks were written on the board to support learners’ production and the task was first modelled by the teacher with students’ participation.

Excerpt 8

1 **Algodão doce:** Has it got scales?

2 **João Felix:** No, it [h]asn’t.

3 **Algodão doce:** Has it got (3.0) claws?

4 **João Felix:** No, it [h]asn’t.

5 **Algodão doce:** Has it got scales?

6 **João Felix:** No, it's got. *Não!* ((tr: No!)) No, it [h]asn't.

7 **Algodão doce:** Has it got a fur?

8 **João Felix:** Yes! It's a frog.

9 **Algodão doce:** Frog? *Eu disse* ((tr: I said)) "has it got a fur"!

10 **João Felix:** *Ah, não percebi. Minha vez...* ((tr: Oh, I didn't understand. My turn...))
Has it got fur?

11 **Algodão doce:** Yes. *Espera!* ((tr: Wait!)) Yes, it has.

As we can see in excerpt 8 and according to the teaching journal (November 14th: "most learners used English during the interactions and often mixed English and Portuguese when asking me questions, 'O tiger *tem* whiskers?'"), the learners were able to complete the task successfully and used English most of the time. With Pair 7 above, L1 was only used for task-management purposes and to clarify a misunderstanding (lines 9 and 10). In lines 2, 4 and 6, it is possible to observe a very common mistake among Portuguese speakers, the omission of the /h/ sound. This happens because the letter "h" at the beginning of Portuguese words is always silent, therefore, learners tend to overgeneralize that rule. Although the chunks were modelled and, predicting this would be a problem, the teacher called students attention repeatedly to the /h/ sound, some children take longer to acquire it. It is interesting to notice that João Felix did not make the same mistake in the question chunk, when the /h/ sound was at the beginning of the sentence.

Unlike her partner, Algodão doce did not have any problems with pronunciation. However, her grammar was not as accurate, for instance, in line 7, she asked "Has it got a fur?" a sentence she had not encountered before. When presenting the chunks, giving examples and modelling the task, I decided not to call learners' attention to the use of the article in order to see how or if that feature would be picked up by learners. It is interesting to observe how neither of them used "a" before plural nouns, but that Algodão doce used it before "fur", a word that might seem to be singular, but is uncountable in this case and therefore is not preceded by an indefinite article. There is one long unfilled pause in line 3, which suggests the learner was taking time to think and choose what part of the body to ask about.

Excerpt 9

1 **Francisco Galinha:** Has it got a foo [fur]?

2 **Sweet Cotton Candy:** Yes, it has.

- 3 **Francisco Galinha:** Has got a foo? (3.0) Ah, yes! (3.0) A teeth?
- 4 **Sweet Cotton Candy:** Yes.
- 5 **Francisco Galinha:** Is it a tiger?
- 6 **Sweet Cotton Candy:** No.
- 7 **Francisco Galinha:** Is it a [h]amster?
- 8 **Sweet Cotton Candy:** Hamster, *tens de dizer* ((tr: you have to say)) hamster.
- 9 **Francisco Galinha:** Hamster?
- 10 **Sweet Cotton Candy:** Yes.

Unlike the previous dyad, Pair 5 had more difficulty to complete the task (Appendix P). As we can see in line 3, Francisco Galinha made two long unfilled pauses in the same utterance, showing that his thinking was taking longer than expected, probably trying to remember the vocabulary which had not yet been learnt. Not only did the dyad struggle with the pronunciation of the nouns “fur” in line 1 and “hamster” in line 7 (again, a case of /h/ omission, this time corrected by a peer), but they also did not use the chunks appropriately. Even though he used the question chunk correctly in line 1, Francisco Galinha omitted the subject “it” in the first question in line 3 (another example of how children do not focus on form) and did not use the chunk at all to ask about teeth. Like Algodão doce in excerpt 9, he also used the article “a” inappropriately in lines 1 and 3 (“teeth” being an irregular plural noun). Pair 13 also displayed the same problem, as seen in excerpt 10 below.

Excerpt 10

- 1 **RDT:** Has it got claws?
- 2 **Star:** Yes.
- 3 **RDT:** Has it got a tail?
- 4 **Star:** Yes.
- 5 **RDT:** Has it got a teeth?
- 6 **Star:** Yes.
- 7 **RDT:** Is it... It's a... It's a tiger?
- 8 **Star:** No.
- 9 **RDT:** No a tiger?
- 10 **Star:** No.
- 11 **RDT:** Monkey?
- 12 **Star:** *Isso!* ((tr: That's it!))
- 13 **RDT:** *Minha vez. Já está.* ((tr: It's my turn. Ready)).

14 **Star:** Has it got a tee?

15 **RDT:** A tee? Teeth!

16 **Star:** Teeth! Has it got a teeth?

17 **RDT:** Yes.

18 **Star:** It's got a tail?

RDT began the interaction using the question frame correctly, not using “a” before the noun as it is a regular plural noun ending in –s (line 1) and using it on line 3, before a singular noun. Nevertheless, he used the article before “teeth” in line 5, as Francisco Galinha had done in excerpt 10; a mistake that was repeated by his partner in lines 14 and 16. It is interesting to notice how he proceeded to correct Star’s pronunciation explicitly in line 15, evidencing once again how learners can help each others’ language acquisition actively during oral interaction. Although RDT was able to use the question chunk, his partner’s use of the formulaic sequence was not as consistent, as shown in line 18, when she resorted to another chunk, one she was probably more familiar with. None of them used the answer chunks, even though they were written on the board. The utterances were very short, therefore, there were not many pauses, only one moment of hesitation and repetition in line 7. Another interesting moment in this excerpt is how RDT checked the information he had received in line 9. He did not know how to ask “Isn’t it a tiger?” or “Not a tiger?”, therefore he used the words he had to express what he wanted and was easily understood. His rising intonation as well as context were probable factors that facilitated understanding. As we can see, learners were also not used to asking questions with “Is it a *noun*?” and used the affirmative form “It’s a *noun*” with rising intonation. They had not been asked to use this chunk explicitly before, although they had certainly encountered it many times in the past, as it is a very common sentence used by teachers of EFL.

3.1.7. Second set of formulaic sequences – post-task test

Even though the recordings of this oral task show that some learners’ use of the chunks was still not quite accurate, the results of the post-task test (a question in the second formal test: Appendix J), suggest that learning did take place. For the purpose of this study, spelling mistakes (e.g. “hasnt”) were not considered relevant mistakes in the results shown in Figure 3.

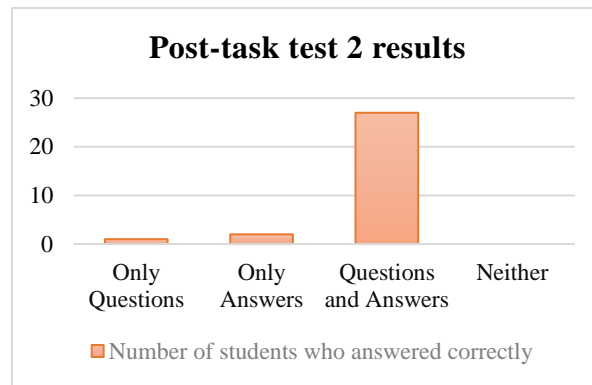


Figure 3 – Post-task test 2 results

One month after learners had taken pre-task test 2, the meaning of the chunks was clear and their structure seems to have been acquired. In the pre-task test only 9 students (30% of the group) were able to write the “Has it got a *noun*?” chunk and 5 (16,6%) were able to write “Yes, it has”. As we can see from the graph above, by the end of this unit of work, only 3 students (10% of the group) were not able to produce both questions and answers correctly in writing. As previously mentioned, due to time constraints, there was not an opportunity to do and record an oral post-task test for this set of chunks.

The analysis of the results in this section suggest that by using the given chunks, learners were able to engage with the language and successfully complete at least three spoken tasks in pairs. It also can be said that their language use improved with practice as their utterances became more accurate (not omitting words and correcting the pronunciation of the /h/ sound, for example) pauses became less frequent and thus utterances became more fluent.

3.1.8. Questionnaires

Prior the introduction of any vocabulary and pre-task tests, students were given a questionnaire (Appendix M) to discover their abilities and beliefs towards speaking in English. One student was absent on the day they took the questionnaire, so 29 students answered it. The results suggest a positive attitude and a general openness towards speaking English in the classroom. However, students were not quite confident about their ability to actually speak and understand English. 41% of the group answered they were “more or less” able to speak and almost 50% answered they were “more or less” able to listen and understand. Although most learners agreed that it was important to do speaking activities, 21% said they disagreed.

In the end of the term, the questionnaire was repeated with one more sentence regarding students' feelings towards speaking activities and one open question about the activity they enjoyed doing the most this term. All 30 students were present and answered the second questionnaire (Appendix N). The results of both questionnaires are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 – Questionnaires results

	Questionnaire 1			Questionnaire 2		
	YES	MORE OR LESS	NO	YES	MORE OR LESS	NO
I am able to speak English with my classmates during activities in pairs.	16 (55%)	12 (41%)	1 (4%)	20 (67%)	10 (33%)	0
I use phrases like “Good morning!”, “How are you?” and “Can I go to the toilet, please?” when talking to the teacher.	16 (55%)	9 (31%)	4 (14%)	19 (63%)	10 (33%)	1 (4%)
I am able to understand stories and dialogues I listen to in English.	14 (48%)	14 (48%)	1 (4%)	16 (53%)	11 (37%)	3 (10%)
I believe it is important to do activities that involve speaking English in class.	23 (79%)	0	6 (21%)	30 (100%)	0	0
I like doing activities that involve speaking English in class.				26 (87%)	4 (13%)	0

Comparing the results, a gain in learners' confidence in speaking is evident. There was a 12% increase in the number of learners who think they are able to speak English with a partner and a 21% increase in the number of students who believe speaking activities are important. This can be interpreted as a result of how doing oral tasks gave the children a feeling of accomplishment and made them realize how capable of communicating they were. The classroom language in the second sentence was not explicitly taught but rather encouraged by the teacher's own use of the phrases and only 1 student answered he/she did not use them. Overall, by the end of this study, learners seemed to realize they were able to speak English to communicate (within their limits), to feel more comfortable during such activities and to recognize them as learning opportunities.

The open ended question about which activity learners had enjoyed doing the most during this term had several answers that could be grouped into four categories, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5 – Activities students enjoyed the most

Activity	Number of students/Percentage
Mini-cards games	12 (40%)
Guessing game (animal body parts)	5 (17%)
“Listen and do” games	4 (13%)
General pair work	5 (17%)
*Did not answer	4 (13%)

As we can see in the table above, all the categories with the exception of “Listen and do” games involved oral interaction and pair work (the mini-cards games were done in pairs, as exemplified in the methodology section). Therefore, almost 74% of students picked activities related to speaking, meaning they had a positive experience with those and showing a positive attitude towards speaking.

3.1.9. Observing learners’ attitudes

According to my teaching journal, learners kept “asking to repeat some of the tasks with mini-cards” (November 29th). Overall, they seemed to enjoy the lessons and felt accomplished being able to complete the tasks. It is worth mentioning that Fortnite was the boy who used to have a hearing impairment and had difficulty following the lessons. He was very shy with me and often disruptive; he did not enjoy listening/watching stories or working on the coursebook. However, during the oral tasks, he was always interested. According to my learning journal, “Fortnite is usually easily distracted but was really engaged in the communicative task with his partner” (October 7th). This is an example of how oral interaction between peers can be motivating for learners who are often uninterested. Speaking activities done in pairs became a way to keep this learner interested, provided him with a safe, less threatening space in which he felt comfortable to speak and gave him an enjoyable purpose to use English (playing a guessing game, for example).

The results presented previously suggested that by taking risks performing the tasks, completing the tasks successfully and working in pairs contributed to create a positive attitude towards speaking English. According to the questionnaires, students who were not very confident in their ability to speak at first became gradually more self-assured and some even changed their minds regarding pair work and the importance of doing such activities.

3.2. Discussion and conclusion

3.2.1. Research questions and findings

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the connection between oral interaction and formulaic language, to find out how these two widely studied elements could meet and support each other in a primary English classroom and to examine if and how learners attitudes towards speaking English was influenced by taking part in peer interaction. The teaching and reinforcement of the use of selected chunks, allowed learners to complete the communicative tasks successfully without analysing the language syntactically or in a word level. The repeated use of the chunks in enjoyable and meaningful situations seemed to have contributed to language learning, to improve learners' production and to foster a positive attitude towards speaking in class.

Data analysis showed that by the end of each unit of work, learning had taken place as learners were better able to produce the chunks. Regarding the first group of chunks tested, comparing learners' production the first time they used the formulaic sequences with the last time, it is clear that there was an improvement in fluency (considering the general fluidity of students' speech, a smaller number of pauses) and accuracy (proximity to the given formulas). However, as said previously, there was not an opportunity to assess any changes in learners' oral production of the second set of formulaic sequences.

Regarding learners' attitudes towards speaking English in class, the analysis of the questionnaires results and the notes quoted from my teaching journal suggest that most learners enjoyed working with their peers and, with time and practice, felt increasingly at ease and confident about their speaking skills. All students benefited from interacting with a peer, especially more insecure and shy students such as Fortnite.

3.2.2. Relevance of oral interaction and the use of formulaic sequences

Given the results presented in the previous section, it is clear that oral interaction between young learners is not only possible, but actually essential for their development. The Portuguese *Metas Curriculares de Inglês – 1º Ciclo* (Bravo, Cravo & Duarte, 2015) propose that the main goal for grades 3 and 4 is the development of oral skills; something that can only be achieved through practice. In a class of thirty students, such as the one in this study, it would be physically impossible for all learners to interact with the teacher

in one lesson. Additionally, as demonstrated before, it is not only the teacher who is able to support students' production; peers support each other, either by correcting one another's pronunciation or clarifying the meaning of a certain phrase. Many are the benefits of oral interaction, as defended since the beginning of this report and, as the results suggest, formulaic sequences can be used to promote the interaction at the same time the children acquire the language in chunks that can be broken down or expanded in the future.

The teaching of formulaic language is one way of enabling students to produce whole sentences without explicit grammar explanations. Knowing they are still in a concrete stage of thinking (Piaget, 1954) and that abstraction of concepts such as metalanguage is still a challenge, talking to young learners about verb forms and word functions is quite a challenge and, as was demonstrated here, unnecessary. Presenting language as individual words will always be a starting point, but showing and helping our learners to form sentences to communicate is what learning and teaching any foreign language should be about. Once again, as demonstrated in the previous section, the acquisition of formulaic sequences is the same as the acquisition of individual words; it takes time and repetition (of exposure and of practice). It is worth remembering that by actually using a language, learners move forward not only in their language acquisition but also develop essential social skills, which they will use throughout their lives.

3.2.3. Reflection over the AR

This research project has given me the opportunity to learn about what lies behind practices that I have always tried to incorporate into my lessons. Through this study, I started gaining a greater understanding of the importance of peer oral interaction, how it supports learning and child development, of how formulaic sequences can be stored and retrieved from memory with the same "effort" as individual words and therefore possibly automatized. It has also taught me that although some initial resistance might be faced, after experiencing situations in which they have to interact in a safe and encouraging environment (which does not mean correction-free), overall, learners gained confidence in themselves and in their ability to communicate. It is also possible to affirm that by the end of this project, learners had widened their repertoire of not only individual vocabulary items, but also of sentences which will be used and expanded throughout their studies.

After completing this study, I can now look back and see what could have been done differently in order to really foster learners' capacity to communicate using the selected chunks (i.e. doing more oral tasks) or to go even further (i.e. providing samples and encouraging the use of more procedural language sequences). Although twelve weeks is a notably short period of time to teach, practice and test different sets of formulaic sequences, an initial long term plan should have been more carefully done in order to make data collection richer. Additionally, I recognize that in certain settings it is difficult to match everyone's expectations (the parents', the school board's, my cooperating teacher's and my own), especially when it comes to assessment and coursebook use, and still find the time to set up opportunities for communication.

3.2.4. Future research

In order to better understand how formulaic sequences and oral interaction are interconnected, a longer project would be desirable to follow learners' development more closely, to better assess which chunks were really acquired over time and to measure changes in learners' production. It would also be interesting to conduct a study with control groups that do not have opportunities for peer-oral interaction or who interact with a different form of instructions (without focusing on chunks, for example).

Furthermore, a study that researched how formulaic sequences can be stretched over time, which elements of a chunk are first acquired and what teachers can do in class to fit that into their practice would be relevant for many. Finally, it would also be interesting to investigate how using these sequences in such early stages of language learning will reflect on learners' future ability to analyse language.

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Appendix A: Letter of consent to school director

Pedido de autorização à Direção do ____

Exmo. Sr. Diretor _____,

Estou a fazer um Mestrado em Ensino de Inglês no 1º Ciclo na Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas na Universidade Nova de Lisboa, e este implica que durante o estágio faça um pequeno projeto de investigação. Este projeto fará parte do meu relatório final, e intitula-se *Formulaic Language Sequences and Oral Interaction in the Primary English Classroom* (Linguagem Formuláica e Interação Oral nas Aulas de Inglês da Educação Primária).

Venho, por meio desta, solicitar a vossa autorização para incluir os alunos da turma ____ neste projeto que vai decorrer entre setembro e dezembro de 2019, durante o meu estágio.

Depois de pedir autorização aos alunos e encarregados de educação da referida turma para os incluir no meu estudo, a recolha de dados consistirá em um questionário introdutório sobre as atividades que os estudantes estão habituados a realizar em sala e uma sequência de teste-lição-teste. Gostaria de esclarecer que ao me referir a “testes” não falo de avaliações formais, mas atividades escritas e orais que me permitam avaliar o domínio dos alunos sobre certas estruturas. Serão utilizadas avaliações diagnósticas, tarefas comunicativas baseadas na interação em dupla, gravações de áudio destas tarefas e novas atividades para julgar o uso da estrutura trabalhada nas interações.

O objetivo deste projeto é promover e facilitar a interação oral entre os alunos, uma das habilidades mais importantes desenvolvidas neste ciclo de aprendizagem. A qualquer momento os alunos podem escolher não participar. As informações obtidas serão referidas no meu relatório final de mestrado e eventualmente em artigos académicos e conferências.

A instituição tem a opção de ter seu nome mencionado ou de permanecer anónima. Todos os seus funcionários e as crianças permanecerão anónimos em qualquer circunstância. Nunca serão tiradas fotografias nem obtidas imagens, quer da instituição quer das crianças, contudo, o mesmo não se irá aplicar aos trabalhos dos alunos, que permanecerão no anonimato.

Lisboa, 22 de setembro de 2019
Letícia Gonzalez da Silva

Prof.ª Dra. Carolyn Leslie
Orientadora de Estágio
FCSH, Universidade Nova Lisboa

Eu, _____

Diretor do __, declaro que fui informado dos objetivos do projeto intitulado *Formulaic Language Sequences and Oral Interaction in the Primary English Classroom* (Linguagem Formuláica e Interação Oral nas Aulas de Inglês da Educação Primária) e autorizo os alunos da turma ____ do 3º ano do 1º Ciclo a participar no estudo.

Desejo que a instituição: ☐ Permaneça anónima. ☐ Tenha seu nome mencionado no trabalho.

Data: _____

Assinatura: _____

Appendix B: Letter of consent to parents

Caros pais e encarregados de educação,

O meu nome é Letícia Gonzalez e tenho vindo, desde meados de setembro do corrente ano, a realizar o meu estágio em ensino com o seu educando. No âmbito de um relatório final de estágio de Mestrado em ensino de inglês no 1º ciclo na Universidade Nova intitulado *Formulaic Language Sequences and Oral Interaction in the Primary English Classroom* (Linguagem Formuláica e Interação Oral nas Aulas de Inglês da Educação Primária), venho por este meio, solicitar a autorização para poder incluir o seu educando neste estudo.

O estudo decorrerá entre Setembro de 2019 e Dezembro do mesmo ano, envolvendo um trabalho com as crianças da seguinte forma: realizaremos um questionário introdutório sobre as atividades que os estudantes preferem e que estão habituados a realizar em sala e, durante as aulas, seguiremos uma sequência de teste-licção-teste. Gostaria de esclarecer que quando me refiro a “testes” não falo de avaliações formais, mas atividades escritas e orais que me permitam avaliar o domínio dos alunos sobre certas estruturas. Serão utilizadas avaliações diagnósticas, tarefas comunicativas baseadas na interação em dupla e no uso da língua, gravações de áudio destas tarefas e novas avaliações para julgar o uso da estrutura trabalhada nas interações.

O objetivo deste projeto é promover e facilitar a interação oral entre os alunos, assim desenvolvendo a capacidade de comunicação, uma das habilidades mais importantes desenvolvidas neste ciclo de aprendizagem. Todas as crianças podem deixar de participar em qualquer momento se assim o entenderem.

A informação recolhida fará parte do relatório final de estágio de mestrado em ensino, sendo os resultados obtidos divulgados no respectivo relatório. Os alunos permanecerão anónimos em qualquer circunstância.

Agradeço que até ao dia 23 de setembro de 2019 me conceda a autorização para proceder à implementação do estudo em causa, permitindo que o seu educando faça parte do estudo.

Letícia Gonzalez da Silva

Professora Doutora Carolyn Leslie
Orientadora de Estágio
FCSH, Universidade Nova Lisboa



Eu, _____, encarregado de educação de _____
_____, declaro que fui informado(a) dos objectivos do estudo intitulado
Formulaic Language Sequences and Oral Interaction in the Primary English Classroom
(Linguagem Formuláica e Interação Oral nas Aulas de Inglês da Educação Primária) e autorizo o
meu educando a participar no estudo.

Data: _____

Assinatura: _____

Appendix C: Letter of consent to the children

Eu e o Estudo da Letícia



Escreve **V** de verdadeiro ou **F** de falso.

	V ou F
A Letícia explicou-nos que está a estudar para se tornar uma melhor professora.	
A Letícia quer nos ajudar a falar mais em inglês com os colegas.	
A Letícia vai nos ensinar frases curtas para utilizarmos em atividades escritas e orais durante as aulas.	
A Letícia explicou que vai fazer algumas atividades para descobrir quais frases nós já conhecemos.	
A Letícia explicou que vamos fazer as atividades orais sempre em dupla.	
A Letícia vai gravar as nossas vozes durante as atividades e depois escrever tudo o que dissermos.	
A Letícia vai mostrar o estudo dela a muitas outras pessoas que também estudam sobre aulas de inglês.	
A Letícia nunca vai contar a ninguém os nossos nomes verdadeiros.	
A Letícia explicou que posso deixar de participar a qualquer momento.	

O meu nome completo é: _____

Sublinha o que está certo:

- Eu aceito participar no estudo da Letícia.
- Eu não aceito participar no estudo da Letícia.

Como a Letícia não vai contar os nossos nomes verdadeiros a ninguém, se aceito fazer parte deste estudo, tenho de escolher um nome faz de conta.

O nome faz de conta que escolho é:

(Por exemplo: um animal, um personagem, uma cor ou uma flor).

A data de hoje: ____/____/____

A minha assinatura: _____



Appendix D: Pre-task test 1

Pre-task Test 1

Order the words in each sentence.

A: do sports / do / you / ?

1. _____

B: I / yes, / do

2. _____

A: watch films / you / do / ?

3. _____

B: don't . / I / no,

4. _____

Appendix E: Pre-task test 3



THE TORTOISE

1) heavy shell/ it's / a / got

2) got / hasn't / fur / it

3) ? / has / short legs / it / got

4) has / it / yes,

Appendix F: Task 1, class survey

Do you listen to music?

Yes, I do.

	Me			

Adapted from: *New Tiger 3: Essential activity book*. (2018). Macmillan Education.

Appendix G: Task 2 mini-cards



New Tiger 3: Essential activity book. (2018). Macmillan Education.

Appendix H: Post-task test 1

Formal Assessment Test 1

① Order and write. Answer.

1. pictures / you / ? / paint / Do ✓

Do you paint pictures?

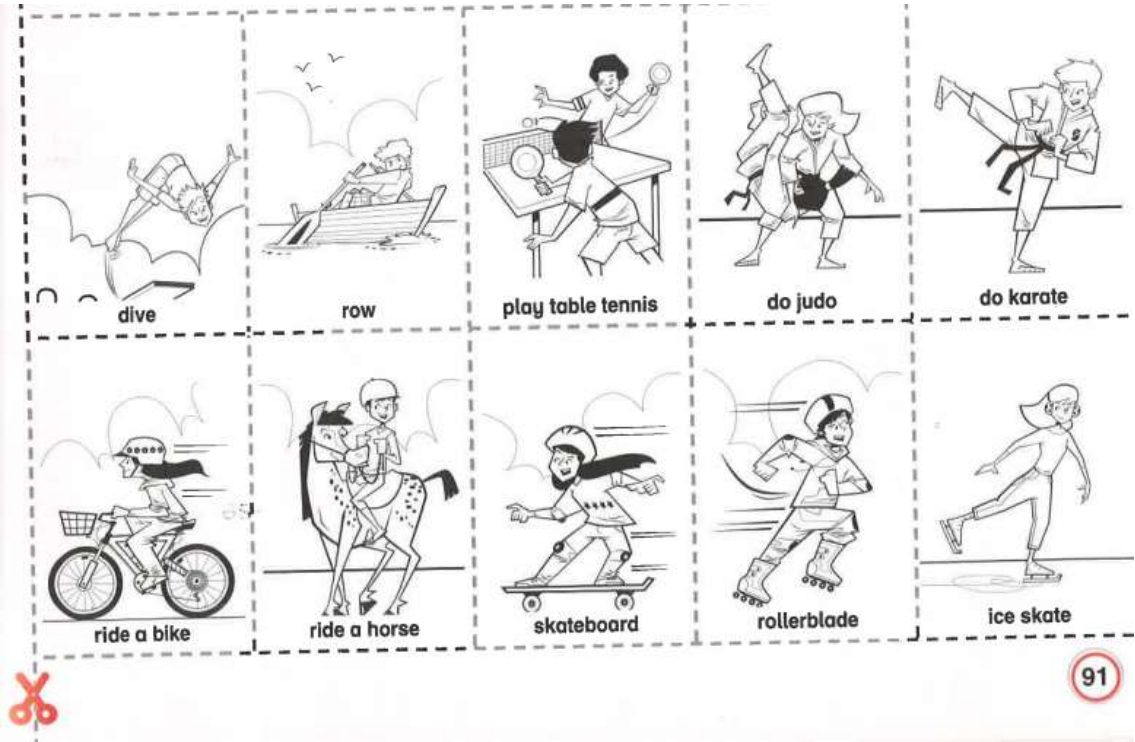
Yes, I do.

2. you / ? / sports / Do / do ✓

3. watch / you / ? / films / Do ✗

4. on / Do / excursions / ? / go / you ✓

Appendix I: Post-task test mini-cards and days of the week chart



New Tiger 3: Essential activity book. (2018). Macmillan Education.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday

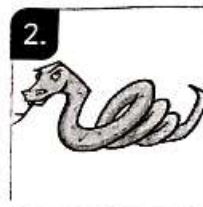
Appendix J: Post-task test 2

Formal Assessment Test 2

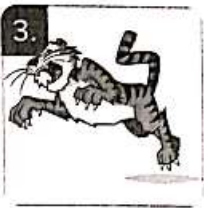
2. Write questions. Answer using: *Yes, It has./No, it hasn't.*



Has it got
feathers?
Yes, it has.



legs?
No, it hasn't.



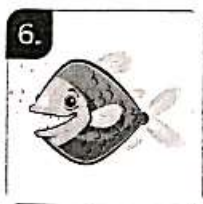
claws?
Yes, it has.



wings?
No, it hasn't.



a shell?
Yes, it has.



scales?
Yes, it has.



fur?
Yes, it has.

It's got _____.

Circle what is true to you:

1. I don't know the meaning of this phrase.
(*Eu não conheço o significado desta frase*).
2. I know the meaning of this phrase.
(*Eu conheço o significado desta frase*).

Appendix L: Transcription conventions

:	Elongation of a syllable
(.)	Brief untimed pause
(3.2)	Interval between utterances (in seconds)
<u>word</u>	Speaker emphasis
CAPITALS	Loud sound relative to surrounding talk
◦ ◦	Utterances which are noticeably quieter than surrounding talk
◦◦ ◦◦	Whispered utterances
< >	Talk produced slowly and deliberately
()	Unclear or unintelligible speech or attempt to transcribe such speech
→	A feature of special interest
<i>sim</i> ((tr.: yes))	Non-English words are written in italics and followed by English translation in double brackets
T:	Teacher
[Indicates overlap with portion in the next turn that is similarly bracketed
(())	Comments
[finished]	An approximation of the right sound in the case of inaccurate pronunciation.

Figure 4 – Transcription conventions (abridged from Leslie, 2015, p. 67)

LETÍCIA'S STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE



Rodeia **SIM** / **MAIS OU MENOS** / **NÃO** de acordo com o que pensa de cada uma das frases abaixo.

Sou capaz de falar em inglês com meus colegas durante as atividades em pares.	SIM	MAIS OU MENOS	NÃO
Uso frases como "Good morning!", "How are you?" e "Can I go to the toilet, please?" ao falar com a professora.	SIM	MAIS OU MENOS	NÃO
Sou capaz de compreender histórias e conversas que ouço em inglês.	SIM	MAIS OU MENOS	NÃO
Acho importante fazer atividades que envolvam falar em inglês na sala.	SIM	MAIS OU MENOS	NÃO

Como gosto de trabalhar em sala:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Sozinho.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Com um(a) colega.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Em uma equipa pequena.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Com todo o grupo.



Atividades que gosto de realizar nas aulas de inglês:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Aprender canções e cantá-las.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ouvir histórias contadas pela professora ou em vídeos.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ler histórias em silêncio.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Contar histórias para/com um colega.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fazer perguntas e responder a um (ou mais) colega(s).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Jogar jogos de tabuleiro.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Jogar jogos de adivinhação.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fazer fichas.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Usar os manuais.

LETÍCIA'S STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE.2



Rodeia SIM / MAIS OU MENOS / NÃO de acordo com o que pensa de cada uma das frases abaixo.

Sou capaz de falar em inglês com meus colegas durante as atividades em pares.	SIM	MAIS OU MENOS	NÃO
Uso frases como <i>"Good morning!"</i> , <i>"How are you?"</i> e <i>"Can I go to the toilet, please?"</i> ao falar com a professora.	SIM	MAIS OU MENOS	NÃO
Sou capaz de compreender histórias e conversas que ouço em inglês.	SIM	MAIS OU MENOS	NÃO
Acho importante fazer atividades que envolvam falar em inglês na sala.	SIM	MAIS OU MENOS	NÃO
Gosto de fazer atividades que envolvam falar em inglês na sala.	SIM	MAIS OU MENOS	NÃO

A atividade que mais gostei de fazer este período foi: _____

Appendix O: Transcription of Pair 10's delayed oral post-task test

Adam: *És tu ou eu?* ((tr: Is it you or me?))

Pompom: *Pergunta! Do que tu quiseres.* ((tr: Ask! Whatever you want))

Adam: Do you:

Pompom: Do karate.

Adam: Do karate?

Pompom: *Em qual?* ((tr: In which one?))

Adam: Eh... Thursday!

Pompom: Yes.

Adam: *Como é que eu acertei?* ((tr: How did I get it right?))

Teacher: You were lucky!

Adam: Do you on Thursday – *não* ((tr: no)). Do you uh rubber...

Teacher: Rollerblade.

Adam: Rollerblade on ((4)) Wednesday?

Pompom: No, I don't.

Adam: Do you skateboard Wednesday?

Pompom: No, I don't.

Adam: *Vou tentar todas as opções na Wednesday!* ((tr: I will try all the options on Wednesday!))

Teacher: Now let Pompom ask...

Pompom: Do you do judo Monday?

Adam: No, I don't.

Pompom: Do you skateboard Friday?

Adam: No, I don't. Do you do judo a-a [stutters] Wednesday?

Pompom: Wednesday? No. No, I don't. Do you dive on Friday?

Adam: Dive on Friday... no. Do you dive (3.0) Tuesday?

Pompom: Yes, I do!

Adam: [celebrates]

Pompom: Do you... do you dive Monday? *Ai, não, não.* Do you dive Monday?

Adam: No, I don't.

Pompom: Do you dive Thursday?

Adam: No, I don't. *Ah sim, sim, sim.* Yes, I do.

Pompom: Do you do judo Wednesday?

Adam: No – *ah, já viste.* ((tr: Oh, you've seen it))

Pompom: *Põe outra.* ((tr: Put another one))

Adam: Do you karate Friday?

Pompom: Friday? No, I don't.

Adam: Do you ride a horse on Wednesday?

Pompom: Yes, I do. Do you... do you... do you ride a horse on Monday?

Adam: *Não vale, tu viste!* ((tr: It doesn't count, you saw it!))

Appendix P: Transcription of Pair 5's task 3

Francisco Galinha: Has it got a foo [fur]?

Sweet Cotton Candy: Yes, it has.

Francisco Galinha: Has got a foo? (3) Ah, yes! (3) A teeth?

Sweet Cotton Candy: Yes.

Francisco Galinha: Is it a tiger?

Sweet Cotton Candy: No.

Francisco Galinha: Is it a kitten?

Sweet Cotton Candy: No.

Francisco Galinha: Is it a kitten?

Sweet Cotton Candy: No.

Francisco Galinha: Is it a [h]amster?

Sweet Cotton Candy: Hamster, *tens de dizer* hamster.

Francisco Galinha: Hamster?

Sweet Cotton Candy: Yes. Yes, it has. It's a feathers?

Francisco Galinha: No, it [h]as[n't].

Sweet Cotton Candy: It's a fur?

Francisco Galinha: Yes.

Sweet Cotton Candy: It's a teeth?

Francisco Galinha: Yes, it has.

Sweet Cotton Candy: It's a kitten?

Francisco Galinha: No.

Sweet Cotton Candy: It's a tiger?

Francisco Galinha: No.

Sweet Cotton Candy: It's fish?

Francisco Galinha: No.

Sweet Cotton Candy: It's a monkey?

Francisco Galinha: Yes.